November 29, 1963
8:55 p.m.

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND SENATOR RUSSELL (t)

LBJ Dick?

DR Yes

LBJ I hate to bother you again but I wanted you to know that I made an announceme..

DR Announcement of what?

LBJ Of this Special Commission..

DR Oh, you have already?

LBJ Yes... may I read it to you... The President announced that he is appointing a Special Commission to study and report upon all the facts and circumstance relating to the assassination of the late President John F. Kennedy and the subsequent violent death of the man charged with the assassination.. The President stated that the Majority and Minority leadership of the Senateand the House had been consulted with respect to the proposed Special Commissio... The members of the Special Commission are: Chief Earl Warren, Chairman; Senator Richard Russell, Georgia, Senator John Sherman Cooper, Kentucky; Rep. Hale Boggs, Louisiana, Rep. Gerald Ford, Michigan Honorable Allen Dulles, Washington, Honorable John J. McCloy, New York. The President stated the Special Commission is to be instructed to evaluate all available information concerning the subject inquiry. The Federal Bureau of Investigation, pursuant to an earlier directive of the President is making complete investigations of the facts. An inquiry is scheduled by the Texas Court of Inquiry convened by the Attorney General of Texas under Texas law. The Special Commission will have before it all the evidence uncovered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and all the information available to any agencies of the Federal Government. The Attorney General of Texas has also offered his cooperation. All Federal agencies and offices are being directed tofurnish services in cooperation to the Special Commission ..The Commission will also be empowered to conduct any further investigation as deemed desirable. The President is instructing the Special Commission to satisfy itself that the truth is known as far as it can be discovered and to report its findings and conclusions to him to the American people and to the world.

DR Well, now Mr. President, I know I don't have to tell you of my devotion to you..but I just can't serve on that Commission...I'm highly honored you'd think about me in connection with it..but I couldn't serve on it...with Chief Justice Warren...I don't like that man..I don't have any confidence in him at all..I realize he is a much greater man in the United States..than anyone.. and so you get John Stennis.....

LBJ Dick...it has already been announced and you can serve with anybody for the good of America and this is a question that has a good many more ramaifications than on the surface and we've got to take this out of the arena where they're testifying that Krhuschev and Castro did this and did that

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LBJ Contd — and check us into a war that can kill 40 million Americans in an hour and you would put on your uniform in a minute and the reason I've asked Warren is because he is the Chief Justice of this country and we've got to have the highest Judicial people we can have. The reason I ask you is because you have that same kind of temperament..and you can do anything for your country and don't go giving me that kind of stuff about you can't serve with anybody..you'll do anything.

DR — It is not only that..I just don't think the Chief Justice should have served on it.

LBJ — Well the Chief Justice ought to do anything he can to save America and right now..we've got a very touchy thing and..wait until you look at this evidence.. you wait until you look at this report...now...I'm not going to lead you wrong and you're not going to be an old ..

DR — I know that..but I have never..

LBJ — You've never turned your country down ..this is not me..this is your country and the members of the Special Commission or the Chief Justice Warren or Senator Richard Russell...and I go right down the list now.. I've got Allen Dulles, John McCloy..but you're my man on that Commission and you're going to do it and don't tell me what you can do and what you can't..because I can't arrest you and I'm not going to put the FBI on you but you're goddammed sure going to serve, I'll tell you that..and A. W. Moursund is here and he wants to tell you how much all of us love you.. wait a minute..

DR — Well, Mr. President, you ought to have told me you were going to name me

? LBJ — I told you...I told you..the other day I was going to name the Chief Justice ...I called you

DR — You did not..you talked about getting somebody from the Supreme Court ..you didn't tell me you were going to name him.

see processing note

LBJ — I told you...I told you I was going to name Warren and you said it would be better to name ~~Hacken~~ Clark..

DR — Oh..no...and I said Clark wouldn't do..

LBJ — No...that's right and I've got to get the highest Justice I can get...He turned Bobby Kennedy down..they talked to him and he said he wouldn't serve under any circumstances...I called him down here and I spent an hour with him and I begged him as much as I'm begging you..I just said,...now here's the situation..I want to tell you.

DR — You've never begged me..you've always told me.

LBJ — No, I haven't..no I haven't.

DR — Mr. President, please now.

LBJ — No. It is already done. It has been announced.

DR — You mean you've given that..

LBJ — Yes sir. Igave the announcement..it is already in the papers and you're on it and you're going to be my man on it and you forget that..wait a minute AW wants to say a word to you and I'll be back..

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AW Hello, Senator?

DR Well, we're just sitting here talking and he says I've got one man that's smarter than all the rest of them put together...

DR You don't have to butter me up..

AW I ain't buttering you up, Senator..you know I'm not that kind of a fellow. I just heard that and I wanted you to know it.
Hell, he's depending on you..you know that. And he just got through saying ...he said I've got one man on there ..that's better than all the rest of them put together..

DR Laughter...

AW That's the truth and you know it.

DR Well, AW, I don't know when I've been so unhappy about a thing as I am this ...

AW Well, I know, but God Almighty you can take it..good God you've taken it for years, and the hard ones and the tough ones and you can take care of it and you can take care of yourself...

DR How are things down in Texas...kill any deer down there?

AW But you come see us but don't say you can't do anything cause you're the best "can-do" man there is.

DR Oh no..oh no...

LBJ Dick? Now..we're going into a lot of problems. I saw..we had lunch together and I saw Sanders and I've seen a good manypeople ...saw Wilkins today ...had a long talk with him..now these things are going to be developing ...and I know you're going to have your reservations and your modesty ...but now your President's asking you to do these things and there are some things I want you in besides Civil Rights and by God you're going to be in them because I can't run this country by myself...

DR You know damned well my future is behind me and that is not entering into it at all..

LBJ Well, your future is your country and you're going to do everything you can to serve America..

DR I can't do it..I haven't got the time..

LBJ All right...we'll just make the time..

DR With all my Georgia items in there..

LBJ Well, we're just going to make the time...there's not going to be any time to begin with..all you'll do is evaulate the Hoover report he has already made...

DR I don't think they'll move that fast on it..

LBJ Well, OK, well them we won't move any faster than you want to move but you're going to lend your name to this thing because you're head of the CIA Committee and the Senate and you're going to have Fulbright and Hickenlooper on it because this thing is breaking faster than you think and I've already talked to Hickenlooper and Fulbright and asked them to go with you.. sit on your Committee because I don't want these torn up...Secretary of State

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LBJ Contd of...State...came over here this afternoon. He's deeply concerned Dick about the idea that they're spreading throughout the communist world that Khruschev has killed Kennedy..now he didn't. He didn't have a damned thing to do with it ...

DR Well, I don't think he did directly... I know Kruschev didn't because he thought he'd get along better with Kennedy..

LBJ All right..but we've...

DR I wouldn't be surprised if Castro had....

LBJ O.K..OK..that's what we want to know and people have got confidence in you and you'd...you can just be surprised or not surprised...they want to know what you think and AW Moursund is one that wants to know what you think

DR ....you're taking advantage of me but of course...

LBJ No. No. No. I'm not taking advantage of you. I'm going to take a hell of a lot of advantage of you my friend, cause you made me and I know it and I don't ever forget ...and I'm going to be taking advantage of you a good deal..but you're going to serve your country and do what is right and if you can't do it ....you get that damned little Bobby up there and let him push your tail and put a cookerbird under it. Where is he?

DR I don't know..he's in Atlanta tonight..

LBJ Well..you just tell him to get ready because I'm going to need him and you just tell him that ..

DR I saw he and he and Vandervir (?) this afternoon..for about thirty minutes they came by here...

LBJ Well, you tell either one of them that I just would like to use them any place because I'm a Russell protege and I don't forget my friends and I want you to stand up and be counted and I don't want to beg you, by God to serve on these things that amount to something..

DR I know but this is a sort of rough one..

LBJ No, it is not rough..what is rough about this? I talked to Jim Eastland... Jim Eastland said this is the best thing that ever happened..Jim Eastland... I talked to Tom Dodd..I've talked to everybody..and not a damned one of them....all these folks are going to be part of this.

DR Yes sir, I'm sure they will..

LBJ They had a full scale investigation going Dick with the TV up there.they had the House Un-American activities Committee in it...

DR Well all of that was like that but they shouldn't have done it...

LBJ Well of course, but how do I stop it? How do I stop it Dick. Now don't tell me that I've worked all day and done wrong.

DR I didn't say you'd done wrong..I just said they ought not to have had that kind of a hearing and they ought to have stopped it and it could have been stopped some other way.. I could have stopped it in the Senate....

LBJ What do you think I've done wrong now by appointing you on a Commission?

DR Well, I just don't like Warren...

LBJ Well, of course, you don't like Warren..but you'll like him before it is over-with..

DR I haven't got any confidence in him...

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LBJ Well...you can give him some confidence..God damn it..associate with him ..now you're not..you've got nothing to...I'm not afraid to put your intelligence against Warren's...now by God, I want a man on that Commission and I've got one...

DR I don't know about the intelligence, of course...and I feel like I'm being kidded..but if you think..

LBJ Well..if you think..now Dick do you think I'd kid you...

DR If it is for the good country..you know damned well I'll do it..and I'll do it for you..for that matter...I still feel like it sort of getting wrapped up..

LBJ Eh, Dick..do you remember when you met me at the Carlton Hotel in 1952? When we had breakfast there one morning..

DR Yes I think I do..

LBJ All right.. Do you think I'm kidding you?

DR Now.. I don't think you're kidding me..but I think..well, I'm not going to say anymore, Mr. President. ...I'm at your command...and I'll do anything you want me to do...

LBJ Well you damned sure going to be at my command..you're going to be at my command as long as I'm here..

DR I do wish you be a little more deliberate and considerate next time..about it, but this time..of course...if you've done this...I'm going to do it and go through with it...and say I think it is a wonderful idea.

LBJ Well, I'm not going to be any more deliberate than I've been about this cause I've been pretty deliberate but I'm going to have you on a good God damned many things that I have to decide and you're going to be America's representative and I don't want any special obligation..I just know you're going to call them as you see them and I've served under you and I don't give a damned if you have to serve with a Republican...if you have to serve with a communist..if you have to serve with a negro...or if you have to serve with a thug..or if you have to serve with A. W. Moursund...

DR I can serve with a Communist..and I can serve with a Negro...I can serve with a Chinaman..

LBJ Well you may have to serve with A. W. Moursund...

DR And IF I can serve with A. W. Moursund...I would say, Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to serve with you, Judge Moursund...but well, we don't discuss it any further/Mr. President, I'll serve.

LBJ OK Dick and give Bobby my love and tell him he'd better get ready to give up that fruitful law practice he's got...

DR He's been appointed to the Georgia Court of Appeals now..you see..I got him on there..he's making as much money as I am..

LBJ Well about Vandiver?

DR Well, he's running for Governor next time..and will be elected..

LBJ Well, who in the hell is going to help me besides you?

DR Well, those boys will help you if you need them?

LBJ I need them

DR God damn it..they're harder for you than I was...remember?

LBJ No..nobody ever has been more to me than you have Dick....except my mother...

DR Laughter

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LBJ No...No..that's true. I've bothered you more and made you spend more hours with me telling me what's right and wrong and...than anybody except my mother...

DR I've done more than anybody wants to do....

LBJ No...No..I never made you do anything that was wrong..I never...

DR I didn't say wrong...I said more things I didn't want to do...but Bobby and Ernie are two of the most loyal friends you've got on earth...they both called me up and said you've just got to do whatever Mr. Johnson says..

LBJ No...I don't want you to do that..I just want to counsel with you and I just want your judgment and your wisdom ...cause I haven't got any Daddy and you're going to be it..and you just forget it..

DR Well, Mr. President, you know..I think you know me.

LBJ I do..I do..I know you for your country and period. Now you just get ready to do this and you're my man on there ...

DR Well if you hadn't announced it.. I would absolutely be..

LBJ No..you wouldn't..no, you wouldn't..

DR Yes, I would...yes I would..

LBJ I told Warren...Warren told me he wouldn't do it under any circumstances ...didn't think the Supreme Court Justice ought to go on ..wouldn't have anything to do with it..he said a man that criticized this fellow that went on the Nuremberg trial...Jackson...he told me what he thought about Goldberg ...he thought he was terrible...and I said let me read you one report..and I just picked up one report and read it to him...and I said O.K.....
there's 40 million Americans involved here...

DR Well you see I may be totally wrong ...I think Mr. Warren would serve on anything you'd give him any publicity on...

LBJ Well you want me to tell you the truth? You know what happened?

Bobby and them went up to see him today and he turned them down cold and said NO. Two hours later I called him and ordered him down here and he didn't want to come. I insisted he come..came down here and told me No twice and I just pulled out what Hoover told me about a little incident in Mexico City and I say now, I don't want Mr. Kruschev to be told tomorrow and be testifying before a camera that he killed this fellow ..and that Castro killed him and all I want you to do is look at the facts and bring in any other facts you want in here and determined who killed the President and I think you can put on your uniform of World War I..fat as you are...and do anything you could to save one American life...and I'm surprised that you the Chief justice of the U. S. would turn me down.. And he started crying and said, well I won't turn you down..I'll just do whatever you say..but he turned the General down...

DR Well, you ought not to be so persuasive..

LBJ Well, I think I ought to..

DR I think you did wrong in getting Warren and I know damned well you did wrong

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DR
Contd | in getting me but I hope to do the best I tan..

LBJ I think thats what you'll do..that's the kind of Americans both of you are..
Goodnight.

DR Goodnight.

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Date: September 16, 1993

## Processing Note

Re: Telephone Conversation between the President and Senator Russell (t), 11/29/63, 8:55 p.m.

While working on preservation of the dictabelts, the archives staff observed the following inaccuracy in the transcript:

On page 2, the transcript reads:

LBJ: "I told you...I told you I was going to name Warren and you said it would be better to name Harlan."

DR: "Oh..no...and I said Clark wouldn't do."

**The archives staff heard:**

LBJ: "I told you I was going to name Warren and you said it would be better to name Harlan."

DR: "Oh..no, we talked and I said Clark wouldn't do 'cause...."

Claudia Anderson
Archivist

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